



John Scroggin's
FIRST VISIT AT CHAUTAUQUA
BY G. F. BEASLEY

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JOHN SCROGGIN'S

First Visit at Chautauqua.

Build with Sport and Culture Blended.

A POEM

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



BY

✓
GEORGE F. BEASLEY, B. S.

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1899.

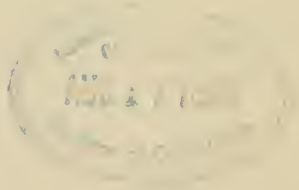


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"He was raw-boned, lean and lanky."

John Scroggin's First Visit at Chautauqua.

✻

JOHN SCROGGIN was a farmer,
Whom I met one time in Wayne;
He was raw-boned, lean and lanky,
And his neighbors thought him cranky;
He was said to have a mighty love of gain.
With that love he had the prudence
And the parsimony, too,
In the little things of dealing,
Conscience rarely troubled feeling;
And often *interlarded* were his butter jars we knew.

He had studied the proportions
Of a ton of hay so well,
That before he sought a buyer
He would raise the corners higher
Of the load he had to sell,
'Till a half-ton seemed a whole ton
To a city novice's gaze;
And no measure was awarded,
Like the cord-wood that he corded,
How he made a half a whole cord would amaze.

A good wife had neighbor Scroggin,
And a son and daughters three,—
Hopeful, youth and charming lasses,
Taking beauty as it passes
Midst the country folks we see.
And the good wife showed quite plainly
Where her cherished hopes were stored:
If to manhood's pathway straightness
Led to honor and to greatness,
Surely her son's claims could never be ignored.

In the good wife's modest fashion,
In her gingham, plain and neat,
Calf-skin shoes, thick soled, for weather,
Sun bonnet without a feather,
Her simplicity was sweet.
And the daughters—heaven bless them!
How their cheeks with crimson glow!
Bust—The plumpest and the roundest,
Health—the rosiest and the soundest,
All a mother's love was proud of them, I know.

Every mother's son is dearest,
Every father's daughter best;
Father likes the girls in gingham,
And like pearls he likes to string 'em
'Round him, in his household nest.
Sons are mother's, though in blue jeans,
All too short for Broadway style;
Stogy boots, where full moon faces
Shine, with kindly household graces,
Do not shut out mother's smile.

Did you ever see a maiden from the country fresh and fair,
With her bashful, sidelong glances,
Modesty and whims and fancies;
Without bangs, or crimps or feather,
Dressed as though she'd hold together?
Such were Farmer Scroggin's daughters then and there.

Scroggin, 'midst his rural pleasures,
Knew the world but by report.
In his rude, unpolished bearing,
Far from home was seldom caring
To stray away for idleness or sport.
But his son and robust daughters,
He would have them *know* the world;
See it in its lights and shadows,
As the sun flecks all the meadows,
When the clouds are o'er them whirled.

Farmer Scroggin was a plain man;
But he had a wish to be,
As the shadows gather round him,
Richer far than boyhood found him,
In the world of industry.

When the summer's sultry weather
Drove the idlers, far and near,
Into distant watering places,
To display their charms and laces,
There to flirt with newer faces,
On the boulevard and pier,
Farmer Scroggin would be with them,
How or where he did not know;
But he felt that Scroggin's daughters
Somewhere should have summer quarters,
E're the Autumn breezes blow.

He had heard about Chautauqua,
Where good Methodists abound;
And he'd heard that tents and houses,
"Free for husbands and their spouses,"
At Chautauqua Lake are found.

So, one morning at the table,
In his quaint, old fashioned way,
Farmer Scroggin was surprising
In his humorous uprising;
He seemed, for just a moment, to be gay.
"Old womern, I've bin thinkin'
That I'd like to have a spree.
Forty years we've toiled together,
Through all sorts and spells of weather;
Ain't it now vacation time for you and me?"

"Folks with any social standin',
At this season of the year,
Take to boatin', fishin', ridin',
Take to summer moonlight glidin',
Take to picnics and excursions far and near.
Here's our gals, as plump as roses;
Don't you think the chaps would smile,
If upon a bank of roses,
They could sit and pick up posies
With these gals of mine awhile?"

"What do ye say, gals?

Like it, would ye?

Ha! ha! ha! how red they be!

That's the paint for any season.

Any chap with sense or reason

Would twist his choicest moustache quick, to see.

Never had I much of larnin',

But these gals have been to school.

Gals, make a map, and on it draw

Such a place as '*Chau-tau-qua*',¹

Where they say the weather's always cool.

"Would ye like to go, old womern?

Would ye like to go with me

Back to days when we were courtin'?

Tender down my lip was sportin',

It wan't the stiff old moustache you now see."

"It is good to leave the kitchen,

Where you've bin queen over all;

While in household skill advancin',

Upon Folly's legs learn dancin'.

Now, wouldn't ye like to 'tend a fancy ball?

Cut a pigeon wing? I tell ye

Though I'm old, I'm mighty spry.

Where's the fellow that could swing 'em,

Dressed in calico or gingham,

With a bigger swoop around the hall than I?"

¹—Scroggin pronounces it "Shaw-ta-quaw."



*"Cut a pigeon wing? I tell ye
Though I'm old, I'm mighty spry."*

(Then the girls :) "O, will you take us ;
 Father, will you take us where you say?"
"Take ye? If I don't, old Scroggin
Will deserve a dozen floggings.
 We're goin' down to 'Chau-tau-qua' to-day."

Landed are our rural neighbors
 At Chatauqua; on the whole
We have here a panorama,
And a comedy in drama,
 And the Scroggins all are in the title role.
In this little social drama
 We must have a change of scene.
Curtain rises on a dwelling,
On a hill-side gently swelling
 Into terraces and lawns of richest green.

Shall we take a peep within it?
 It is empty, but inviting to survey.
No; we'll leave our rustic neighbors
To their summer sports and labors,
 When we've heard what Farmer Scroggin has to say.

"Wife," one morn, said Farmer Scroggin:
 "It is now nigh forty year
Since we jined the church; and never
Have our quarters been so clever
 As this cottage we have here."



*"Landed are our rural neighbors
At Chautauqua."*

"Don't ye think I met this mornin',
As I went out for a walk,
An old, jealous pated snoozer,
Who appoints himself as chooser,
Says we've got to move, for that's his talk."

"Stranger," says I, "are ye crazy?
H'aint I bin in camp afore?
Forty years of marriage union
And good Methodist communion
Helps a man to know his rights, if nothin' more.
This is not my first camp meetin', Stranger—
Forty I have seen—never once was I molested,
Never once my rights contested
To the usin' of a little patch of green."

"'Taint no land as fit for farmin',
'Tisn't cleared, you couldn't plow,—
And the house, it ain't perfection,
Though the best that's in this section;
Since I'm here first, I don't think that I shall go."
"You will go, or pay me rent, sir,"
Said the landlord, with a frown.
"Do you claim to own this manger
Where my lambs are feedin', Stranger?
Prove yer title, and old Scroggin will come down."

"But I want no impersition
From a fancy chap like you;
I'm not strapped, yer little paster,
I can cover with a plaster
Made of greenbacks, and I've got them with me, tu."
Farmer Scroggin paid the landlord
As the quickest way to peace;
Then his way along pursuing,
All his angry thoughts subduing,
'Twas the first time he had ever made a lease.

He was strolling out one morning,
Suddenly, to his surprise,
A great company before him
On the hill-side gathered o'er him,
And he heard the voice of some one speaking, rise.
Up he went, and for an hour
Heard our Dr. Vincent talk;
Heard the questions flying faster
Than the swift foot of disaster,
And he thought he'd found a "love-feast" in his walk.

And, indeed, it was a "love-feast;"
In a moment's pause arose
Farmer Scroggin, in his quaint way,
Told his "'x'sperience," as the saints say;
As he told it, sawed the air with many blows.



*"I'm not strapped, yer little paster,
I can cover with a plaster
Made of greenbacks, and I've got them with me, tu."*

"Ye were tellin' us of heaven, —

My old womern says it's here.

Forty years we've jogged toward glory,

And we think we've got the story

All by heart, this many a year.

Lovin' Jesus is a business,

Just as I loved Hanner June

'Fore she changed her name to Scroggin,

'When we took them school-day floggings,

And danced up to a threshin' master's tune.' "

"Don't I love the Lord of Glory?

H'aint He suffered lots for me?

What have I done for the Master,

Once so fast, and going faster,

On the road to deviltry?

"Nothin! like a brand from burnin',

How He snatched me with His hand.

If any sinner needed snatchin',

It was me that needed catchin',

And I toed the mark at once, at His command.

Breth'rin, I'm nigh on to eighty,

And I love to praise the Lord;

Halleluyer! I'm for glory!

Halleluyer tells the story;

Don't he say so in His word?"



*"Ye were tellin' us of heaven, —
My old womern says it's here."
Halleluyer! I'm for glory!*

Here the old man was reminded,
By a listener at his side,
That the Doctor had suspended
Further lecture 'till he'd ended;
And the thing he'd better do was to subside.
"Brethren, I should ask your pardon;
Didn't mean to talk so long."
At his zeal a suppressed laughter,
As he sat down, followed after,
But none accused him of intended wrong.

"What di'ye call the place of meetin'?"
Never saw so fine a stand."
"It is the Amphitheater,
And it is a fine one, sir,"
Said a stranger near at hand.
Horror-struck, amazed, confounded,
Farmer Scroggin turned and said:
"Stranger, did I hear ye say
We've been to theater to-day?
Was that the *starry actor* there, who read?
Stranger, I've been very wicked,
And committed grievous sin;
But, right there I told the story
Of my blessed Lord in glory,
And that actor *had* to hear it if he never does agin."

Farmer Scroggin at Chautauqua

With his hopefuls was a sight;
In their rural rustic greenness
There was little of sereneness,

But they found in all its newness much delight.
And so new and so delightful

Was Chautauqua to their eyes,
All the womanhood of woman,
All that makes her sweetly human,
Was bidden in its soulfulness to rise.

O, ye wand'ers among nations,

Tired souls, unsatisfied:
Know ye not congenial waters
Sparkle for your sons and daughters,

That Chautauqua throws her welcome open wide?

During all these lovely mornings,

When the summer breezes play
Over drowsy sleepers' faces,
Tossing bangs and curls and laces,

In the early peep o' day,
Farmer Scroggin and his hopefuls
Were astir with household cares;
Little did they think of sleeping,

And from their vacation reaping
 What they so much needed—bodily repairs.
But the thump and scold of washing
On the Monday morn was heard,
 Long before the sun had risen
 From his dark horizon prison,
Or the merry chirp of early morning bird.

Did the rousing bells of morning
 Ever waken them from rest?
Warning bells and night bells sounding,
Rang to dreams in their resounding,
 For Scroggin long before was in his nest.
In his dream he thought of farming—
Wondered if the pigs were fed;
 Wondered if the corn was weedy;
 If the turnips had grown seedy,
If the fodder, being nipped by frost, was dead.

Did it profit well our neighbors
That a lake of beauty lay
Tempting boating, fishing, swimming.
Sportful rest for men and women,
Whose cares should have been left at home to stay?
Did they walk the terraced hillsides?
Did they go to Palestine?
Scroggin would be boiling over,
If his eyes should once discover
Where the "Holy Land," in miniature, was seen.
Here's the "Dead Sea" and the "Jordan,"
Silver chained, to "Gallilee;"
And "Jerusalem" the glorious,
Now defeated, now victorious,
And "Herman," "Olives," "Tabor," "Calvary."

All the air with classic odors,
Like the breath of early spring,
Feeds the soul whose love of learning
Is intense, complete and burning
With a zeal to know the most of everything.
How the young hearts of the children
Bounded in their childish glee;
Farmer Scroggin was delighted
When he saw in one, united
Sport and culture for the millions, such as he.



*"When his house became a college,
Where his children gathered knowledge."*

When he saw his children prying
 Into things he rarely scanned,
When his house became a college,
Where his children gathered knowledge,
 And that books and apparatus were in very great
 demand,
How his old heart yearned for boyhood!
 How he wished that he was young!
For they questioned and they teased him,
And these children kissed and squeezed him,
 While Chautauqua songs to him they daily sung.

Books were mingled with their pleasures,
 Curious eyes were opened wide;
Problems found a quick solution,
Telling words found elocution,
 And they hoaxed and coaxed and toasted him beside.
O, ye fathers and ye mothers,
 Who stay home year after year;
Ye shall answer for withholding
From your dear ones such unfolding;
For yourselves sake you need scolding;
 Just consider you are getting scolded here.

Life is man and woman building,
And we build each, day by day;
In the sham and in the gilding
Of the structure life is building,
There is much that will delight us every way.
But to build one-sided manhood,
Is to build him mean and small;
And to build but half a woman
Is to make her less than human;
It were better neither should be built at all.

Build thyself, then, O ye masters;
In the building have a plan.
Build with sport and culture blended,
So cans't thou be well defended,
In the building and the gilding of a man.



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